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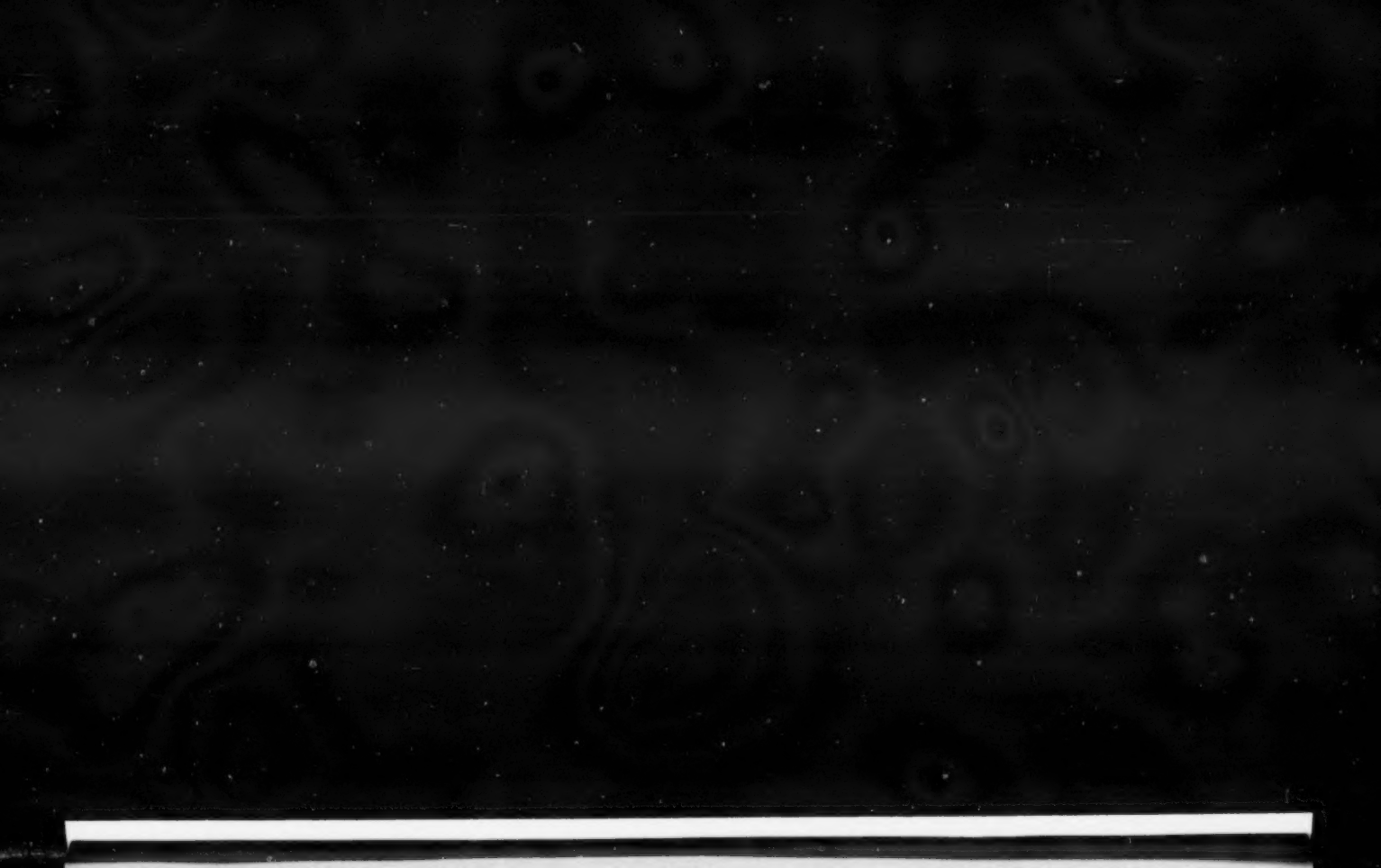

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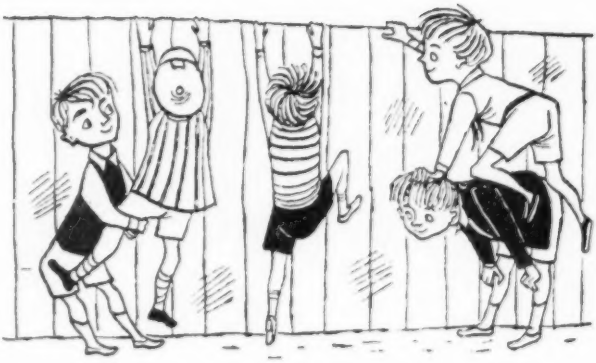

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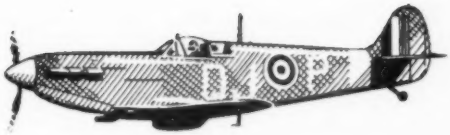

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Illustration by W. Stobbs from *The Pigeongram Puzzle* (Cape)

THE
JUNIOR BOOKSHELF

JULY, 1955

Catching Them Alive

By ELFRIDA VIPONT

BROADLY speaking, there are two types of characters in books, the live ones and the dead-alive ones. The appearance of the latter in adult fiction is regrettable; in children's books it is deplorable. For the adult has the whole world of literature to draw upon, whereas the child, standing at the gateway of literature as of life, has — save in exceptional cases — only his own narrower field to explore. Within that field, the friends of a

lifetime may await him, to be discovered in due course if he is fortunate, or to be passed by, lost in a host of pasteboard caricatures.

What friends in books may mean to a lonely child is shown by Dickens in his picture of the boy Scrooge, sitting forsaken in the dingy classroom when the other boys have gone home for the holidays, yet solaced by the shades of Ali Baba and Robinson Crusoe at his elbow; or David Copperfield with his shelf of books in the attic — "from that blessed little room, Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas and Robinson Crusoe came out, a glorious host, to keep me company." If ever an author recaptured something of his own childhood, Dickens did so in those pictures, and his childhood memories never played him false.

For later generations, with an ever-increasing range of children's books to enjoy, such friendships may date from infancy. I must have read the Beatrix Potter stories to scores of children, yet I can still remember, as if it were yesterday, the moment when my mother and I were driven through Sawrey in a governess cart and our hostess remarked: "That's Beatrix Potter's house — you know, the one who writes the Peter Rabbit books!" I looked out eagerly, expecting at any moment to see Peter Rabbit squeezing under the gate, or Mr. McGregor waving his rake, or Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle trotting along with her basket of washing, or Tom Kitten shedding the buttons from his blue suit. To this day I am convinced that I *saw* Peter Rabbit scuttling under the hedgerow — perhaps I did. And to this day those battered little books bring back memories of sights and sounds and smells

which must have been fresh in the mind of the author as she wrote them — the still waters of the lake and the warm comfort of the cottage kitchen; the snip of the tailor's scissors and the squeaking of mice under the wainscotting; the keen air on Cat Bells, the fragrance of the garden, the hot stuffiness under the upturned basket and the mingled scents of spices and herbs and home-cured hams in Ginger and Pickles' shop.

Such a world forms part of the secure background of a generation which has passed all its adult years in an age of insecurity. It opened naturally into the wider world of older children's reading. The characters which came to life for the boy, David Copperfield, "kept alive my fancy and my hope of something beyond that place and time." Whether as children we sought adventure with Jim Hawkins or "treasure" with the Bastables; whether we shared the fortunes of the March family, or King Arthur's knights, or Tom and the Water Babies, or Mole and Rat and Toad; whether we lived in the Secret Garden or in Wonderland; we knew beyond questioning that we possessed the key to a world untouched by change and time and circumstance. To a child who had made that discovery, there is nothing strange or incredible in the further vision of the City of God or the Kingdom of Heaven.

This world of the imagination is an ever-growing one; it opens for our children and grandchildren enriched. Nevertheless, there is nothing inevitable about the process. The "dead-alive" jostle with the "alive" in the seemingly inexhaustible spate of children's literature, and the "dead-alive" are easier and quicker to produce and far less costing to the author. The fertile imagination can create stories and characters

at will; the popular demand is unceasing; the financial reward is attractive. Why, then, should a writer for children and young people attempt anything further? The tradition of authorship that demands "ten per cent inspiration and ninety per cent perspiration" may be the heritage of the children's author of to-day, but against it may be set the clamorous demands of comics, annuals and popular juvenile fiction, much of it wholesome, some of it satisfying, but little or none of it "alive" in the sense of belonging to "something beyond that place and time."

Sometimes it is well for an author to count the cost of "catching them alive." Part of it is obvious — the time needed for gestation, the pangs of creation, the element of the unforeseeable as the characters take on a life and a will of their own. Whenever I feel a book coming alive in the inner recesses of my mind, I am reminded of one of E. Nesbit's stories, where the children are preparing to act a play and have forgotten to provide an audience. There is nothing surprising in that situation — E. Nesbit is as true to life here as she was in everything she wrote. For most children the play is the thing and the audience an afterthought. Once the desirability of an audience is grasped, the children in the story act quickly; they collect hats and walking sticks, macintoshes, coats and gloves, and make a dummy audience with cardboard faces. Then, when the play is well under weigh, the unexpected happens, for the audience suddenly "comes alive" with a soft, puthery sound of gloves applauding without any hands in them. The resultant shock to E. Nesbit's children is no less than the shock to the author when the inevitable occurs, and he feels the first tug at the leading strings as his characters come to life.

Some elements of the cost are less obvious. The time needed for gestation, for getting to know the characters thoroughly long before the story opens, so that their early lives are almost as familiar to the author as his own, not only imposes limits upon prolificacy; it involves an element of personal affection and caring which draws the author's own life into the creative impulse to such an extent that to gain his life he must lose it. He is no longer an impersonal and unmoved creator, looking down upon his creation and moving the strings of his puppets; he is for ever personally concerned and the strings are his own heartstrings. Like the human parent, he is bound up in the fortunes of his children to such an extent that he must not only rejoice and suffer, hunger and thirst, achieve and fail with them, but he must let them learn by their own mistakes, which is perhaps the most difficult task of all. There must be few who have not found this experience hard from the reader's point of view, who have not longed to curb Jo March's hasty tongue, or warn Annie Ridd against the Counsellor, or avert the disgrace of Sir Kenneth in the Talisman. From the author's point of view it is even harder. Personally, I have held up a plot in mid-creation because I could not bear to let a much-loved character make a foolish mistake, only to find book, character and the very nerve of creation die in an instant. The human boy or girl turns to the over-anxious parent with the injunction: "Don't flap — I'm all right!" The imaginary child can only protest dumbly by dying. The answer is the same in both cases — love them and let them go.

For the task of creating live characters in a historical setting, ninety per cent perspiration will hardly suffice. For there the author must live, not only in

the stories and in the characters he has created, but in another period of time. The story must be held back inexorably until the period itself comes alive. The author must work against time, for it is difficult to hold the imagination in check until the background is ready. Speaking from my own experience — which necessarily is the only experience of which I can have inside knowledge — I find that the first foreshadowing of a historical story is apt to come apparently by chance. Some by-path in research — an old journal picked up at random — a place or an ancient building — any of these may bring the flash of illumination. The mind works on two different planes — on the one hand carefully reconstructing the period by patient research, and on the other finding the way into the minds of men and women and children of another age and another habit of thought. To hurry at this stage is to invite factual errors on the one hand and artificiality on the other. Once the lengthy preliminaries are over, a new life sets in, and lucky will be the author who can devote his whole time to the completion of the work, for his own period and his own setting will be remote and unreal until he has finished it. Such an author will indeed be lucky, but almost inevitably, under modern working conditions, he will be rare. Nevertheless, even if some other profession or job claims a large proportion of his time, he will find that his imaginary world has an unsuspected toughness and can well survive relegation to the back of his mind for prolonged periods. The same holds good for the woman author, naturally, except that the woman author with a home to run must go even further. Possibly, for that very reason, she will be the luckiest in the end. For the life in her work must beat so strongly that nothing can disturb it. At any

moment she may be called upon to answer the door or the telephone, to do the washing or the cooking or the chores, to welcome unexpected visitors, look after the children, cope with illnesses, or deal with the hundred and one emergencies which arise, and should arise, in every normal home. Treated as interruptions, these claims can be devastating. Taken in her stride, as part of the fullness of life, they can be enriching and she will return to her work to find that it has gone on growing in her absence.

"Catching them alive" inevitably brings penalties. Just as the author's inner knowledge of his characters may make it hard for him to let them make mistakes, so it may also make him resent criticism of their thoughts and actions. Yet criticism, especially in the early stages, may be of inestimable value in helping him to see the life he has created and to see it whole. At certain points he knows his characters almost too well; he takes their thought processes for granted and leaps ahead without enlightening his readers. Frank criticism while the book is still in manuscript, candidly given and freely received, may be the breath of life to him at this stage. A question as to why his characters have acted as they have done will almost inevitably reveal a break somewhere in the building-up process, and that break will almost certainly have been caused by taking too much for granted. "Of course he did that, because he thought . . . etc. etc.!" "He may have thought it, but *you haven't said so*!"

Criticism of this kind can be invaluable to the author, and in the patient building and re-building, the linking up of thought with thought, the life of his book will be enhanced by it. There is only one kind

of criticism that must and should leave him untouched, and that is the criticism which strikes at the life itself, at the integrity of the work he has created. For whether it be an adventure story, or a family book, or a historical romance, if it is to come alive at all, something of his own philosophy of life will have been woven into it and that, imperfect as it may be, is the source of the quality described by Dickens, which for the boy David Copperfield "kept alive my fancy and my hope of something beyond that place and time." Ephemeral our work may be, and we ourselves "such stuff as dreams are made on," but in that quality lies the seed of growth and we deny it at our peril. It is only the seed and we shall not see the harvest. For all we know, there may never be a harvest. But we have reaped where others have sown, and we too in our turn must sow the seed in faith.

As we look back upon the race which we have run, however faintheartedly, we may indeed recognise amongst the "cloud of witnesses" not only the saints in glory and the loved ones gone before. It may be we have been better men and women, more kind, more understanding, more courageous, more cheerful in the face of adversity, more faithful to the highest that we know, because the shades of the March family and the Bastables and the Water Babies, or Mrs. Over-the-Way and Robin Hood and King Arthur, or Alice and Mowgli and Jim Hawkins and Black Beauty looked down upon our childhood. It is not for us to ask which of the creations of our own day and generation will find a place in Valhalla. It is enough if we have scattered living seed.

Heritage and Heorot

By M. P. J. LAURENCE

EACH generation is conscious of a responsibility to pass on to its successors the traditional culture of its ancestors in song and saying and story. Our own culture stems from three great roots in Palestine, Greece and Scandinavia. It therefore behoves us to help our children to become familiar with these three traditions. Religious teaching and experience introduce the child to the Bible. Book-loving children will read for hours the heroic tales of David and Daniel, of Esther and Ruth, and the adventures of the early apostles Peter and Paul. Religious values apart, these tales are also the literary heritage of our land and there would be hardly a book wholly intelligible to the child who was brought up in ignorance of the Bible. Similarly the child who would fall heir to the portion with which we have been lavishly endowed from the Mediterranean must become acquainted with Greek Myth and Homeric Epic. Thirdly, there is the more austere northern mythology of Baldur and Thor and our own Anglo-Saxon epic material.

I think if we question our child friends or anyone who remembers his childhood, we shall find that each individual imagination has failed to grasp with equal pleasure the Northern and the Greek tales. We seem to take more kindly to one than to the other. This is partly due to different sympathies but partly to the moment and the medium of presentation of the myths and stories. Most of the references in our literature incline more to the Greek than to the Viking. We

prefer Apollo to Baldur, Aphrodite to Freya. And very rarely does the reader come across reference to the tale of Beowulf.

The story of Beowulf the hero, and his three great fights with Grendel, Grendel's Mother and the Dragon, has an instant appeal to the primitive in us all. The sea voyage, the challenge of the watch-man. who is guarding the coast, the tale of the swimming match with Breca appeal to our traditional love of the sea. There are sufficient waste moorlands in most parts of the country even in this urban age to make us thrill to the eerie loneliness of the moorland haunts of the monsters.

"Over the misty moor,
From the dark and dripping caves of his grim lair,
Grendel with fierce ravenous strides came
stepping,
A shadow under the pale moon he moved,
That fiend from hell, foul enemy of God,
Toward Heorot."

Grendel came to prey on the inhabitants of Heorot. Here in the hall there is one of those "gang" groups which appeal to the imagination of youth. Hrothgar builded the great hall, and he is portrayed as a great prince presiding with dignity over his warriors who live with him, providing them with food and drink and shelter, and lavish of the gifts which it is a prince's function to bestow. His queen, Wealtheow, is a gracious hostess, handing the mead-cup courteously to her guests. Tale and song cheer the hearts of the company. Then comes the tragedy, the adventure and the rescue by the young stranger. The virtues of courage, generosity and loyalty are good virtues for civilisation at any phase, in the Heroic Age of the

first centuries in the Christian era, or in the Atomic Age of the twentieth century. There is no boy who will not thrill to Wiglaf's words :— "Say,

> Fellow-warriors! The King needs us, now as never before,
> Is this the time to desert him?" . . .

The Moral Tale is defunct, but it is becoming increasingly clear to educationalists that children must have patterns on which to model their lives and their ambitions. Children must read and hear of the heroes whom we should wish them to emulate, and there are other elements in the heroic besides the toughness of the gangster hero.

Having decided on the birthright of tale and myth, which it will hand on to the younger generation, the present generation must bestir itself to see that there is a suitable modern version of the work available. There is a recent version of the tale of Beowulf, *Beowulf the Warrior,* which is attractive. It is in easy, modern, alliterative verse by Ian Serraillier (Oxford, 1954). It is a spirited and very loose rendering of the Anglo-Saxon verse. The longueurs and repetitions, the allusions to "shadowy race-history" are omitted, but the sweep of the action, rapid and vivid, is satisfying to the young avid reader.

The old language with its kennings and associated epithets influences the new :-

> "Like a strong bird the swan-boat winged her way
> Over the gray Baltic, the wintry whale-road."

The alliteration is strongly marked although the Anglo-Saxon verse form is not strictly followed.

The poem is brilliantly illustrated in this edition by Severin. The imagination of the artist sets the children's minds working along certain lines, here a stimulating rather than an inhibiting process. It might be found however that some of these pictures, fascinating to the older child as to the adult, would be nightmarish to younger children.

Here then has been provided a good contemporary introduction for the young to the heritage of Heorot and to our Saxon ancestors and their values. Further, this is the material which, along with other legend and tale, the imagination of children craves. It is when that imagination is starved, as Herbert Read pointed out in the recent disquiet about Horror Comics, that it "feeds on garbage."

Illustration by I. Hofbauer from *Noel and the Eagles* (Dent)

H. C. Andersen Jubilee Exhibition

ON April 2nd, 1805, in the small town of Odense, was born Hans Christian Andersen—one destined to play a part in the lives of young people the world over. He had a craving for fame, and that he achieved this is shown in the many celebrations held in his honour 150 years later.

In England, where for so long his tales have been an essential part of the lives of the young, where no doubt many would be surprised to learn that the greatest writer of fairy stories was not English, and where so many translations of varying degrees of accuracy exist, an exhibition was held for one month.

It took place at the National Book League with the help of the Danish government, the Royal Library, Copenhagen, and Dr. Klein, owner of the largest collection of Anderseniana in Britain. It was opened on March 31st, in the presence of Prince Georg and Princess Anne of Denmark, by Sir David Eccles, Minister of Education. Also there were the Danish Ambassador and Mrs. de Steensen-leth. The visitors were introduced by the Chairman of the N.B.L., who apologised for the absence of the President, Sir William Haley, owing to the current newspaper strike. The Danish Ambassador spoke briefly of the world-wide celebrations of the Jubilee and was followed by Mr. Elias Bredsdorff, organiser of the Exhibition, and Professor of Danish at Cambridge University, who gave a biographical talk and discussed the many sections of the display, thanking those who had contributed to it, particularly the Royal Library, Copenhagen, and Dr. Richard Klein.

Then followed a reading of one of Andersen's most delightful stories — *The Nightingale* — by Mr. Michael Redgrave, when a spellbound audience was transported back to its childhood, and rediscovered the little bird who tells everything! Finally Sir David Eccles formally declared the exhibition open. He commented on the recent newspaper strike, saying that he hoped it would have encouraged people to return to books. Further he said he had had Anderson much in mind lately, in the course of the present struggle against horror comics and other pernicious literature, and reminded the gathered company of the necessity of fostering the good.

The exhibition itself included all aspects of Andersen's work. It was essentially an Anglo-Danish exhibition, emphasis being laid on the many English translations of Andersen's works, particularly his fairy stories, and also on the time he spent in this country and the personal impressions he created. There were ten principal sections. The first consisted of first and early editions of Andersen's early works — his first poems and his first novel, *The Improvisatore,* some plays and his first tales. The second section contained German editions of his works, many of his works being first translated into German from the original Danish.

The next part — the English translations — was naturally of greatest interest to the general public. Here were editions of his tales illustrated by Maxwell Armfield, Edmund Dulac, Arthur Rackham and the latest World Edition with the original illustrations by Vilhelm Pedersen.

Other sections included later Danish editions of his works, examples of his correspondence, books about Andersen and original letters and manuscripts.

Perhaps the most interesting and certainly the most extensive section of the exhibition was that devoted to various translations of his tales. Apart from the Bible it seems likely that these fairy tales are the most widely translated works in the world to-day. At any rate, here we could see examples of our childhood favourites in 60 different languages — including all European tongues, Breton, Erza Mordvinian, Karelian, Turkish, Bengali, Japanese and various artificial languages such as Esperanto. In many cases these editions were decorated with examples of native art.

Finally there was a collection of articles, books and letters revealing the impression that Andersen created on this country both at the time of his visits and through his works, and correspondence. We find that Dickens, who had a great admiration for him, found him a little trying as a guest.

It was, then, a very comprehensive exhibition, giving a good general view of Andersen's works, and the satisfaction of knowing that his popularity throughout the world has not wavered.

THE CARNEGIE MEDAL for an outstanding book published during 1954 has been awarded to Mr. R. Welsh for his book *Knight Crusader*. This story is a vivid picture of the blood and butchery of the Crusades, details of the social life and dress of the time and the harsh lands of the East. Publisher, the Oxford University Press.

Illustration by R. Kennedy from *The House on the Shore* (Faber)

The New Books

FOR CHILDREN UNDER TEN

ANDERSEN, H. C. *Fairy Tales, Volume 2.* Illus. by V. Pedersen. 368 pp. $5\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$. E. Ward 12/6

At last we have the second volume in the Flensted edition of Andersen's tales, which is being translated by R. P. Keigwin, that 'inspired translator' (as he is called by Rumer Godden in her excellent new biography of Andersen), whom Danish scholars have named as the most exact interpreter of Andersen's fresh colloquial style. This exactness caused some shocks in the first volume, where Ole Lukoie was changed to Willie Winkie and the kitchenmaid in *The Nightingale* said 'golly,' but a little reflection shows that it was high time we knew what Andersen really wrote. The new volume has no such obvious changes, but it is good to have a definitive version, both for better enjoyment of the tales and as a check on other translators. Of the twenty-six stories here added to the eighteen in the first volume, not more than a handful are given in other collections, the most generally represented being *The Shepherdess and the Chimney-Sweep, The Travelling Companion, The Wild Swans* and *The Fir Tree.* The Lane edition duplicates the most, but in spite of its charming illustrations, falls below most other collections in its flowery translations. In the new volume, too, are such good things as *The Darning Needle, The Happy Family, The High Jumpers* and *The Shirt Collar,* and some of the more melancholy parables, like *The Story of a Mother,* still applicable, though hardly the sort of thing we expect from our modern authors. But in spite of some graveyards and early deaths — which were, after all, rather hard to ignore in an age in which they were so evident — how good these stories are, and how individual the voice of the story-teller. The orginal illustrations are often as enlightening as the new translation, and also very pleasant in themselves. The small chunky format is most inviting, and the binding is very firm, and needs to be, for the little book should see a good deal of use.

JONES, G. *Welsh Legends and Folk-Tales.* Illus. by J. Kiddell-Monroe, 230 pp. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. O.U.P. 12/6

This book maintains the high standards of physical beauty and of integrity set by others in the Oxford series of *Myths and Legends.* It is good to have in this very attractive form, and written with such authority and vigour, a selection from an important body of folk-lore.

Will children enjoy the stories? I doubt it. Most of them belong to the realm of legend rather than that of folk-tale. That is, they have the confused splendour of the folk-epic rather than the earthy humour and the tense style of the folk-anecdote. They are difficult to follow, and, although children may well be moved by the noble language and enchanted by the strange music of the names, few on this side of Offa's Dike will be able to make out what is happening and why. Only a few of the later stories in the collection have an affinity with the main stream of European folk-lore with which most English children will be familiar.

Miss Kiddell-Monroe's decorations are as delightful, and as mysteriously in harmony with their subjects, as ever. Surely no other illustrator is at once so much herself and so versatile in adapting herself to the spirit of other countries and ages.

LENSKI, L. *Judy's Journey.* Illus. by the author. 212 pp. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$ . . . . . O.U.P. 12/6

Ten-year-old Judy journeys through America in search of a home, ill-fed, ragged, dirty, yet courageous and keeping alight in her heart a vision of some ideal towards which to strive. This is a brave book, splendidly contradicting the false Hollywood picture of the United States by its convincing realism. The story is not a pretty one, but it has humour, action and meaning. It contrives, without losing humanity, to avoid any trace of sentimentality.

Miss Lenski, whose third 'Regional' book this is, writes a firm conversational prose. She draws, as she writes, with style and honesty and with an accuracy which is a model for any illustrator. No loose ends, no minor falsifications, in her pictures. A very good book indeed.

SEDGWICK, M. *Jan Perry stories.* Illus. by R. S. Fry. 61 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . . . . Dent 5/-

Jan Perry is a harvest mouse with an enquiring mind and a philosophical Uncle Jasper. He has adventures which are modestly exciting and amusing. He and his friends are, more-

over, animals of character, and they are set against a background of wild nature which is poetically conceived and described with eloquence. Altogether a little book which has individuality and charm; parents will get real pleasure from reading it aloud to their five-year-olds.

UTTLEY, A. *Sam Pig and the singing gate.* Illus. by A. E. Kennedy. 184 pp. 8 × 5 . . Faber 10/6

Mrs. Uttley obviously knows enough about Sam Pig to go on writing about him till the cows come home, and her audience is unlikely to get tired. Sam is indeed one of the immortals, one of those rare characters who has a life independently of the books about him. When the reader closes the book with a contented sigh at the close of the last story, he knows that Sam will still be dancing through the fields, singing his gay little songs, cheeking his elders, seeing just a little more than anyone else of the natural and supernatural world about him.

The old qualities appear again in this fresh baker's dozen of tales. There are no better or worse stories. All one can say is that Sam and his author grow in stature with every book; the observation becomes keener and more kindly, the conversation more fluent and homely. And with what loving care does Mr. Kennedy now portray his portly hero. A lovely book. The nicest child will be sweeter for reading it, and the nastiest will catch some of the infection of Sam Pig's kindly philosophy.

EDWIN, M. *The Zig-Zag Path.* Illus. by J. Kiddell-Monroe. 225 pp. 8 × 5½ . . Nelson 8/6

Junior school readers who enjoyed Maribel Edwin's previous book *Curlew Jon* will be just as pleased with the further adventures of Jon in his beloved Highlands. This is a slightly better story, with the nature lore worked in more closely than her first book. It covers the same country, the Scottish Western Highlands, and includes old friends as well as some new ones. There are sheep-dog trials, a corrie with a tarn where otters live and play and a game devised by the Laird which keeps everyone on their toes and leads to some unexpected finds. Miss Kiddell-Monroe's drawings, especially the animal ones, admirably illustrate a tale which should prove as popular as its predecessor.

FOR CHILDREN FROM TEN TO FOURTEEN

ALLEN, A. *The Story of Clothes.* Illus. by Agnes and Jack Allen. 252 pp. 8¼ × 5¼ . Faber 12/6

Miss Allen sets herself an exacting task in attempting to record developments in human habits of clothing and personal adornment, from the beginnings to the present day, in the compass of a single volume of this size. She contrives to maintain the interest largely because she does not forget to relate her changes and counterchanges to social history, political events and material progress among the human race, and especially to geographical discovery and mechanical invention. It will be a constant source of regret that this and other books of its kind cannot nowadays be as lavishly illustrated as the text deserves, but it is a pity that an author who goes to so much trouble to get everything right does not go to a little more and add an appendix giving indications of where illustrations may be studied in more detail, especially in colour. A reader who is really interested can then look into them in his public library without the trouble of wading through unfamiliar territory in the hope of finding what he wants.

BAKER, G. *Golden Dragon, The Story of Alfred the Great.* 152 pp. 8 × 5¼ . . Lutterworth 8/6

Mr. Baker has written a sound and exciting account of the life of one of England's greatest figures, great because of a mind which reached beyond the barbarism of his times to a less savage and happier world, perceived only dimly. It is this, more even than the arduous and magnificent defence of Wessex as the last bastion against the Danes which makes him so remarkable a king. On the whole, England has been lucky in her rulers, and warriors and lawgivers are not rare amongst them, but none had those qualities united to a mind with quite such a passion for learning, such an almost wistful forward-looking to another and more civilised age. He was rightly called 'the Great.'

This book keeps closely to the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' and puts flesh on to the bare bones of that record. The life of Alfred by the monk Asser, who knew the king well, and a few of the surviving traditions are also used. There are good maps, a very desirable feature, but the work would have been no worse off for the omission of a rather garish and improbable-looking frontispiece.

BARNE, K. *Introducing Mozart.* Illus. by J. J. Crockford. 89 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . Dent 6/-

BARNE, K. *Introducing Handel.* Illus. by J. J. Crockford. 90 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . Dent 6/-

In view of the many biographies of these two men, it would seem almost impossible for any author to find a fresh approach or to evoke any new interest in the subject. Yet Miss Barne, who has made music the fascinating background of several books for children, so obviously has the root of the matter in her that she has achieved the apparently impossible. Both biographies are comprehensively detailed, yet never tedious; both bring their subjects to vivid life against a rich background of contemporary history and both are suitable for readers of any age. The writing, particularly in the Mozart volume, is Miss Barne at her very best — refreshingly simple and straightforward, conversational in style, but imbued with sympathetic understanding and genuine love both of music and its creators. Miss Barne eschews the sentimentality which so frequently overlays the biographies of the unfortunate Mozart, yet she introduces real poignancy to her account of his forebodings while composing his Requiem and of his death and burial in a pauper's grave. Throughout the story she makes the reader realise the exceptional genius of her subject. Without any apparent emphasis she shows the inevitability of his work, the way in which he becomes the mere vehicle of his great gift. Music pours from him in effortless flood and nothing at all in his frustrating, poverty-stricken life prevents it or has any importance by comparison.

In *Handel,* the life of London and the Court is brilliantly depicted, social history affecting and being affected by the "great Mr. Handel" whose compositions high-lighted every noteworthy event.

The facts of both these lives are well-known but Miss Barne has given new significance to them, relating event to accomplishment with sympathy, lightening the sometimes sombre tale with a wealth of anecdote and quotation and showing the true musician's appreciation of the work described.

BAUDOUY, M-A. *Noel and the Eagles.* Illus. by I. Hofbauer. 192 pp. 7½ × 5 . . Dent 8/6

This is a translation from the French — *L'enfant aux Aigles* — first published in Paris in 1948. For readers over here it will come as a refreshing surprise. It is a book to

puzzle some children and to enthrall the imaginations of others. The story is set in a mountain village in the Pyrenees a hundred years ago. The hero is a child who was left as an infant orphan on the doorstep of the local innkeeper. He grows into an unusually brave, inventive lad, who, inspired by a fanatic boy cripple, trains three mountain eagles to obey his commands and makes them carry him with them when they fly. With the birds he visits the high slopes of the mountains where no one has ever trodden before. Although this sounds a fantastic theme, it is in fact worked out in a thoroughly practical way. We are shown each stage of the birds' training and the details and snags of the first flights as well as the success of the later ones until the final tragedy. It makes the sort of natural adventure by which readers of every age must be intrigued.

Translations of books like these should surely be encouraged. In books from other countries we do wonderfully escape from the everlasting smug family-adventure, holiday-detection stories, to which even the best of our writers for children seem inclined to turn their hands.

BAYLEY, V. *Little Mallows*. Illus. by A. H. Watson.
187 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . . . Dent 8/6

This book has a quiet and homely air with none of the more frenzied excitement that has characterised some of the author's previous work. Tissie lives with her grandfather, the vicar of a small village, and on leaving school finds that owing to straitened circumstances it will be necessary for her to take up some kind of job. News of a family of children who want a home while their parents are abroad leads Tissie to offer to act as governess while they stay in the vicarage as paying guests. Unforeseen circumstances arise and develop when the family arrives and the eldest is found to be nineteen years of age instead of nine as supposed. There are everyday happenings, superficial but happy literary and musical interests and a small romance, held together by the growing thoughts and reactions of Tissie. Each of Miss Bayley's characters has an individual colour, peculiar to himself and while all the colours tend to be a little pale, there is enough contrast for dramatic interest. Unfortunately there is a somewhat unnecessary episode concerning the visit of a film company to the village and this only serves to light up the more forced and stagey aspects of the story, and pick out previous and further

happenings in its own artificial light. This unnatural air is emphasised again by the too neat parcelling and despatching of problems. The publishers have given us one of their usual pleasing productions and the whole is a comfortable and tidy little work for the older girl.

BURTON, M. *When Dumb Animals Talk.* Illus. by Jane Burton. 112 pp. 7½ × 5 . Hutchinson 6/–

Dr. Burton's province in this short but illuminating book is the methods of communication which animals use and understand among themselves and which human beings have not yet much studied. The title is in fact rather misleading as a good deal of the book is concerned with habits rather than talk, and with some of the mysteries of nature such as the homing sense of dogs and the directional sense of migratory birds. It is all interesting, however, and some of the experiments described may prompt animal owners or observers to invent fresh ones of their own. The illustrations are bold and apt.

CARTER, B. *Gunpowder Tunnel.* Illus. by C. Hough. 172 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . H. Hamilton 8/6

There is enough good here to make up for some wild melodramatics, some type-casting to match, an improbably intelligent fox and a questionable climax, for in spite of such high-jinks it seems likely that the final impression left on the reader will be a further realization of the human story that lies behind the great engineering feats of the 19th century. During the past year or two a number of other books have dealt with the subject, some of them much better, and now that the period has been 'discovered' we may be in for many more, but it cannot be denied that it is an interesting picture. The life of the men engaged on the tunnel which joined the Thames and the Severn is barely touched upon here, and yet it has more force than all the lawless exploits of the wild girl, Cressy, and her pet fox, or Bill the Miner's son, who made quite a good hero until he was left a prisoner of Mortimer Shifty, the unbelievably powerful villain. After that, Cressy and the fox had all the best scenes, and the Perils of Pauline could not have been more exhausting. Since the blacks were so black, it seemed too bad that most of the whites were merely grey, but perhaps that was intentional, to point up the grimness of the times. And it was disappointing to find that Slimy

Slim, who almost became a real creation when he was on the hero's side, turned back to cardboard when he turned traitor. A swift-paced, Saturday-matinee serial, then, made acceptable by a vigorous background and by the rather likable toughness of the young hero and heroine.

CATHERALL, A. *The Scuttlers.* Illus. by A. B. Cornwall and D. Brookshaw. 202 pp. 7½ × 5. Nelson 6/6

The last book by this author, *Jackals of the Sea,* was a good straightforward yarn about a man and a boy saving a tug-boat and its salvage from a gang bent on stopping them; this new book is a more carelessly written account of a man and a boy saving a tramp steamer from a gang out to destroy them. The circumstances are different, as the man was originally one of the gang of scuttlers until the hero, his nephew, stowed away on board the doomed ship, but the interest is much the same, the frantic search for fuel to get up steam, repelling boarders, and even the boy's seeming a ghost to some natives in the enemy crew. Much of the action seems improbable, but it is all good clean fun, though it might be objected that all the villains are foreigners, and as a routine sea story it will do well enough. But as the author seems to be turning out several books a year it might be better to concentrate on only his better work.

CATHERALL, A. *Sea Wraith.* 167 pp. 7½ × 5. Lutterworth 6/–

Despite an occasional stagger this tale of modern piracy in Labrador waters swings along merrily with several novel twists, making good use of the paraphernalia of modern navigation and communication. The timing of events is good and the crooked characters are lifelike without being too unpleasantly gangsterish. The sea background and shipboard life are excellently done.

CHAUNCY, N. *A Fortune for the Brave.* Illus. by M. Horder. 198 pp. 7½ × 5 . . O.U.P. 8/6

Tasmania makes a pleasant and welcome change of setting for any tale, but the tale is even more pleasant when it is itself original in outcome. Huon Trivett, plucked from the lazy pleasures of racing on the Thames to learn farming on a friend's farm in Tasmania, finds himself staying with cousins who are only interested in him because he *may* hold

a clue to an island on which treasure *may* be found. They are not a nice family and go to some lengths to cheat him of a suspected inheritance. Fortunately Huon finds his own allies and, eventually, his own unexpected treasure. More important, he finds himself. Miss Chauncy has a feeling for country and situation and makes the most of both in a quiet, effective style.

DENNISTON, R. *The Young Musicians.* 135 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . . . . Chatto 7/6

Five young people enter a Conservatoire, and three complete the course, one to become a concert violinist, one a flautist in a symphony orchestra, and one a teacher. Several analyses of musical performances are given, and there is some discussion of the various futures open to trained musicians, but there is less information about the actual training, and little of the feel of a musical college and the exciting atmosphere of all the individual and group practising that usually pervades such places. Much of the plot is taken up with one of the students who drops out and the young artist and unofficial guardian whom she marries, though the most continuous interest is provided by the spoiled girl introduced in the first chapter, whose ambitious mother hopes for quick and easy concert successes, for it is she who gradually decides her real future lies in teaching. Otherwise this is an uneven book, somewhat disorganized but quite promising as a book, and as a career book fairly successful in stressing the need for honest self-appraisal and in projecting the characters' feeling about their work, but less successful in describing just what that work involves.

DILLON, E. *The House on the Shore.* Illus. by R. Kennedy. 216 pp. $8 \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ . . . Faber 10/6

A very good story, told in the first person by the boy hero. The setting is the west coast of Ireland, where of course almost anything might happen, and indeed, does. Jim is sent over the hills to stay with an uncle he has never seen. When he gets to the uncle's house he finds it deserted, and soon discovers in the village that some dark mystery hangs about the place and his relation. The unravelling of this mystery makes the book, and unlike so many unravellings, there is no feeling of being let down in the end. I liked the just brogueish idiom in which the tale is told; the nice country people; the

real place; the thrill of the absolutely unlikely event; and a final life and death chase in sailing boats across the night sea. It is all lovely yarny stuff written down by a writer who has eyes bright for the sort of detail that children would themselves pick from a scene (the photographs on the chimney piece, the colour of the furniture, the shakiness of a rope ladder, the night sound of the surf). There are several writers producing goodish, well-worked out, exciting adventure stories for boys and girls at the moment. Eilís Dillon should be noticed for being a clear imaginative jump ahead of the rest of them.

Full page illustrations by Richard Kennedy give no impression of the speed or drama of the story, but help to enlarge characters and the place.

ENRIGHT, E. *The Saturdays.* Illus. by the author. 174 pp. 8 × 5 . . . . Heinemann 8/6

ENRIGHT, E. *The Four-Storey Mistake.* Illus. by the author. 177 pp. 8 × 5 . . Heinemann 8/6

Two unusually satisfying books which have been favourites with both boys and girls in America for over a decade, and now offer a fresh and wonderful view of American life to English readers. The four Melendy children range from six to fourteen when we first meet them, and the adults in their world include a nice, somewhat remote economist-father, a cook-housekeeper who is also friend and counsellor (their mother is dead), Willy Sloper, the laconic handyman, and Mrs. Oliphant a charming old aristocrat of means. Their own means are limited, but not their pleasure in life, which is tremendous. Both books are marked by this delight in sights, sounds, smells, and most of all in people, and through the observation of her characters the author brings the whole scene to life for the reader, giving it an extra dimension by showing it in relationship to the characters. In the first book the family lives in New York City, in the second they move to the country, and both places are made almost touchable, complete with seasonal changes. In the first book the children decide to pool their allowances so that each may have a special Saturday excursion (the blurb states they usually spend Saturdays wishing they had more pocket money, which gives a very false picture of their natures). Each chapter chronicles a separate Saturday, so the reader shares a first visit to the opera, a beauty parlour, an art gallery and the circus, and

hears the story of the foolish-looking girl in the beauty-parlour who had braved the big city as a young runaway, and Mrs. Oliphant's childhood experience of being stolen by gypsies, and catches glimpses of many other people living their own lives, seeing them with a new respect and affection. Something seems to be happening most of the time, but the main sensation is not one of wild excitement, but of delight in the Melendys, their associates, and their conversation—they sound so exactly like young Americans talking, and what is more important, like young human beings talking. For although the books are welcome as giving a genuine picture of American living, they are particularly welcome simply because they are good books about people worth knowing in a world worth living in, books which the reader closes with a sigh of satisfaction and the intention of returning to them often. The illustrations are clear and pleasing.

FINLAY, W. *The Lost Silver of Langdon.* 190 pp.
7½ × 5 . . . . . Harrap 7/6

Several authors today depend upon series similar to this in which a group of young people meet mild adventures in varying regional backgrounds, and in almost every case the result is adequate but a bit dull. There are seldom any *fatal* flaws, but no striking virtues, either; the authors have conscientiously checked all background material and evidently write the books as assignments rather than as creations, although the facts are worked into the story fairly neatly and the characters quite carefully worked out. Miss Finlay's series is as good as any, and the present example is typical of them all. The three Nortons hike through the Durham and Yorkshire moors and become involved in a search for three bars of silver which caused the Borland family to quarrel, they meet a number of suspicious characters who also seem to be after the bars, but after finding three boxes and struggling with them through the Helm Wind to the remaining Borlands discover that the silver has been transferred to the tarn years before by the saintly Miss Ruth to prevent man's greed (much philosophizing here) and that most of the other characters are Borlands too, among them the easy-going young American poet who has provided most suspicion. The author works hard, but the characters are not very sympathetic on the whole, the two older Nortons being rather horrid to the youngest boy, besides being too grown-up to want a mystery, and nearly everyone else seems petty and undependable.

FITT, M. *Pomeroy's Postcript.* Illus. by P. Fortnum.
232 pp. 8 × 5½ . . . . Nelson 8/6

The plot of Mary Fitt's first children's book, *The Island Castle*, was altogether too preposterous to swallow, but a roughly similar interest is raised in this book by more probable means, and it makes enjoyable light reading. Again two young people are unexpectedly sent to stay in an unfamiliar place, but this time they are twin brother and sister, not identical unrelated boys, and they go to a Cornish mansion rather than a mysterious Turkish island. There is not too much skulduggery, though a wicked cousin arranges to have them murdered, and the plot is built up largely through conversations as the children discuss plans and theories. A novel and very pleasant feature is that the third visitor, a fat learned boy of the type so often guyed, is really the hero of the piece, whose learning and strength of character are responsible for uncovering much of the mystery, which concerns a rather unusual treasure of pearls, partly of English culture. The format is clear and open, and Peggy Fortnum's drawings are mostly charming, as always.

GARNETT, EMMELINE. *Heroines of adventure.* Illus. by F. S. May. 143 pp. 7½ × 5 . Muller 6/6

There are short sharp glimpses here into the lives and achievements of such people as Mary Kingsley, Gertrude Bell, Amy Johnson and Rosita Forbes. There are no frills and flounces in the writing and this befits the miniature biographies of women who renounced much of their femininity. The somewhat abrupt, matter of fact, and hasty narratives do not lack the appropriate measure of excitement but one gets an impression of impatience on the part of the author. There are no frills but no flights of imagination either and one feels that the author was not sufficiently inspired by her subject. The style, although flat and hasty, is not hackneyed and contains few clichés but the solidity and plainness slide at times into a bored recitation of facts. The quotations taken from the letters and writings of the heroines are of great interest and add much life and colour to the work. The production and illustrations are very mediocre in quality.

GOTTLIEB, W. P. *Your book of table tennis.* Illus.
42 pp. 8½ × 6 . . . . . Faber 5/6

As you can guess from the author's name this book emanates from the other side of the Atlantic. It is very

suitable for the young player. There are more photographs and amusing cartoons than text and the fundamental idea of the book seems to be that table tennis is fun for beginners and exciting for experts. Its American origin in no way detracts from its value, which is good for the money.

GREEN, R. L. *The Theft of the Golden Cat.* Illus. by E. McGrath. 200 pp. 7½ × 5 . Methuen 9/6

There is a hint of E. Nesbit about this story. Perhaps it is just the fact that the children live in a pleasant rambling old country house and ride on the tops of hay carts and have a spread of woods and rivers and fields and barns to play in. Although the story is a contemporary one, the point of it, the defence by the children of "The Luck of the Lynns" (a solid golden cat face kept in a casket in the study) from attempts to steal it made by Jones the Poacher, has a slightly period flavour. The wicked poacher is not really one of today's bad characters. Family "Lucks," especially those of any intrinsic value must surely by now all have gone into the melting pot. So although the children use modern slang and appear to be reasonable, open-air children of today, they live in a world which is of another time. Not that this will worry the readers of the book. It is excitingly told, and a battle of wits and pluck between bad grown-ups and brave children always goes down well. Many poor line illustrations add an 'out of date' look to the volume.

GRIMBLE, A. *A Pattern of Islands* (*Junior Edition*) Illus. by S. Hughes & T. Pomfret. 154 pp. 7½ × 5 John Murray 6/–

Artistically it is no doubt slightly criminal to 'cut' a book of this excellence, even when the cutting is done by the author himself, but such an attitude must be modified by the value of making such a book attractive to young readers who are frightened by mere length. And certainly it is a good idea to give such readers a chance *now*, before it is too late, to realise 'what the empire was like' and to recall some of its values as 'a unique, if fallible, instrument for the dissemination of happiness and civilisation.' The western isles of the Pacific are not familiar country to most youthful readers and the work of British officers and advisers there is easily forgotten. Grimble's style is little short of captivating and there has been no writing down for this edition which is abridged but not

altered from the original. The book holds an admirable balance between showing what fools white men can make of themselves when ignoring native culture or tradition and what splendid avenues of hope and progress they can open up when once they have gained the respect of the native peoples they serve rather than rule. The book is full of fun and excitement, natural and not invented, as well as of information and personal reminiscence. Illustrations by Shirley Hughes (for this edition) and by Tom Pomfret fit in well with the text and make the book very good value for its price.

HELMERICKS, B. *Oolak's Brother.* Illus. by H. B. Kane. 140 pp. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$. Brockhampton Press 10/6

This profusely illustrated story might be described as a child's guide to life in the Arctic. Though it contains nothing more exciting in the way of adventure than a caribou hunt and two boys trapped in a blizzard the articles of survival are laid down with immense detail and made attractive by their very completeness. Bob and Jeanie Hamilton have no intention of 'going Eskimo' but circumstances force the process upon them and they have to learn fast. Perhaps the illustrations are at times a bit laboured and a reflection of the reader's powers of imagination: on the other hand the book is beautifully produced. It certainly ranks high among the Arctic books for which there seems at present to be a vogue.

LAMPLUGH, L. *The Pigeongram Puzzle.* Illus. by W. Stobbs. 222 pp. $8 \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ . . Cape 9/6

This is a competent piece of hackwork, too well produced, so that one is deceived into thinking that it is better than in fact it turns out to be. Three friends who live on the North Devon coast suspect the activities of some bird-watchers who use homing pigeons to send messages from their base on a nearby island. The children poke about in the usual cat-killingly curious way until they are entangled with the crooks and eventually unearth their secrets. That they are concerned with certain thefts of diamonds which have recently taken place in London is not a surprise to the reader, who has had his attention drawn to paragraphs in the newspapers about these thefts early on in the story. The children are happy, ordinary folk, and that coast is a pleasant place in which to spend a summer holiday with thrills. There are some interesting technical details about learning to fly, but otherwise there is nothing new or remarkable about this neat story.

LANDRU, J. *Smoky, Sledge Dog of Alaska.* 183 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . . . . Parrish 8/6

Mr. Landru's story is concerned with the efforts of a youngster to train and keep a scratch team of dogs in an effort to win the North American Championship for racing dog teams and the author's treatment of his theme is as patient and thorough as the training and care Lance Crawford gives his pets. The prize is a large one: victory for Lance means not only fame but security for his parents and for his dogs. Despite his preoccupation, however, the boy and his friends take their place in community life and neglect neither their studies nor their neighbours. Excitement and expert knowledge are happily combined in the story from beginning to end. The style is clear and dignified and the characters carefully drawn and there is plenty of fun mixed with the serious business.

LEVICK, W. M. *Dry River Farm.* Illus. by M. Ross. 191 pp. $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5$ . . . O.U.P. 8/6

This simply-told tale of life on a South African orange farm gives an excellent and accurate picture of the country, its people (both white and coloured) and their ways That is to say one *feels* it is accurate, one *sees* the farmer and shares the boy Robin's pleasures in meeting the animals of the wild as well as of the homestead. The writer is the daughter of a missionary and has spent her childhood and life as a teacher in the Union of South Africa. Her book has a pleasantly amateurish sound — using the word 'amateur' in its best sense. Many of the day to day happenings on the orange farm, the fun and mild adventures of Robin and his boy and girl friends, must have been experienced by Miss Levick herself, who charms, entertains and educates by this unsophisticated and easily-read tale. Young readers of 8 to 12 years should get an idea of typical farm life in a fairly remote country which will stay in their memories. There are not nearly enough of these informal, half reminiscent, half pictorial stories written by people who really know their own homeland.

LEWIS, C. S. *The Magician's Nephew.* Illus. by P. Baynes. 183 pp. $8 \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. Bodley Head 8/6

In some ways this is the best of the Narnia books since *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,* though like all the series it is oddly disappointing. It precedes the others in time, being

set at the turn of this century, when the magician uncle, a man more silly than vicious, sends his nephew and the little girl next door into the blue by means of rings containing elemental matter. The children visit a dying world, destroyed by a prideful Queen with an Abominable Word (an obvious parallel to atomic weapons, made more fairly and aptly than the parallel drawn between the uncle and the scientist who believes his special knowledge places him above morality). The Queen is accidentally brought back to London, where she presents many problems, especially to the otherwise able illustrator who cannot cope with her gigantic proportions, but she is soon transferred to Narnia with the children, the uncle, a cab-horse and its driver. Aslan is just singing Narnia into being and a pleasant paraphrase of the first chapters of Genesis follows, degenerating badly when the newly created animals take the uncle for a plant and smear him with mud, water, and honeycomb with the bees in it. This kind of physical indignity inflicted on unpleasant characters has appeared more than once in the series and suggests the author thinks that is the only kind of 'fun' children can understand (though there is some humour on another level). Some of his explanations are rather condescending too, and references to the more holy aspects of Narnia are often given in a hushed voice and read rather like Victorian Sunday School books. There is much that is entertaining, but not much that is convincing in the way presumably intended. The allegorical trials and temptations of the nephew are quite well devised but somehow fall flat, being nowhere so effective as the behaviour of the children in Patricia Lynch's *King of the Tinkers*, to give one example of a book in which the point *is* made (and without appearing to be consciously attempted). Some of the situations in earlier books are neatly explained, like the presence of the Witch, but the suspicion grows that Narnia has been created largely to allow the author to include all his pet theories. He seems to have begun with quite a strong framework based on his great knowledge of religion and mythology and of literature, but he couldn't resist adding anything else that caught his fancy, traditional themes, literary conventions, private ideas on society, education, or what have you. This will doubtless prove very useful to later scholars studying his life and work, but it does not make entirely satisfactory children's reading. The series is well-written and

very attractively presented, and probably more worth reading than three-quarters of other books for children written today, but cannot be numbered amongst the best of our time. This is particularly sad since the author would seem so admirably qualified for writing something really special, comparable to his work in other fields. As one of the few surviving specimens of Old Western Man he should be able to leave a better legacy to the children of our age. It does seem likely that some of the Narnian imagery will endure for a time, the Wood between the Worlds, perhaps, and maybe the memory of a land under a lion's governance, but probably not the nature of that lion, which is, after all, the whole reason for the books. The vision is not kept steady enough, and some of its surroundings are too disparate for that.

LYON, E. *Sea Treasure.* Illus. by the author.
192 pp. 7½ × 5½ . . Hodder & Stoughton 9/6

A father sends his motherless daughter off to Scotland for a holiday to meet, unwittingly, the fatherless children of his future wife. All children remain ignorant of the situation until near the finale and while they become attached to one another they spend their time exploring the isolated house on the cliffs where they are staying, and the nearby caves, both of which hold promises of exciting secrets. The author commenced work with a few fresh and significant ideas but these all too soon become enmeshed in the usual guise of 'treasure' stories, while the promise of an exciting climax is never fully realised. It is perhaps the originality of the idea, of the finding of model boats and of their late owner's intended voyages, that entails a more prosaic ending than the usual. Miss Lyons should perhaps be commended for these fresh thoughts on an old theme and for her characterisation which has much of life and truth about it. Her own black and white illustrations are a fair complement to the text.

LYON, W. E. (ED.). *Youth in the Saddle.* Illus.
255 pp. 8½ × 5½ . . . . Collins 12/6

This is a compendium of facts about horses and horse riding for the young, and there are contributions on such subjects as 'Buying a Pony,' 'Schooling a Pony,' 'Point to Points' and 'Fox Hunting,' by known personalities of the horse-riding world, including Pat Smythe, Jack Talbot-Ponsonby and Josephine Pullein-Thompson. There is a mass of infor-

mation that will be avidly read by the young enthusiast and interpreted by many into more sensible, more profitable and more enjoyable action. The writing by many of the contributors tends to be clumsy and ungainly, in no way imitating their action in the field. The translation of their practical action into theoretical writing is one that seems to lose all the ease and suppleness of the original, but their busy and infectious enthusiasm is still retained to be imparted freely to the reader. The photographs are excellent, the few diagrams helpful and the whole production pleasing.

MACLEHOSE, J. H. *The Burnished Sword.* Illus. by R. Hodgson. 222 pp. $8\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. Blackie 7/6

This is a story of the times of William Tyndale and of the bringing into this country, by intrigue and stealth, English translations of the Bible. The tale reads like some mediaeval romance, delicate, sweet and poised, and all the rough and powerful opposition of the time does not seem to disturb the overall gentleness of the atmosphere. Perhaps this is because the story centres round a young girl and her country home. The sweetness declines at times into sentimentality while a bolder treatment would perhaps have ruffled the clichés that trip too smoothly and easily through the pages. There is, however, much sincere feeling behind this work and a strong belief in and enthusiasm for the deeper things of life. This gives strength to the delicacy and power to the sweetness that otherwise would have had a sickly air. The production is pleasant with something of the same mediaeval touch.

MASON, C. *Socrates: The Man who Dared to Ask.* Illus. by B. Mackie. 165 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$. Bell 9/6

This cannot have been a very easy book to write. Philosophy is not normally a subject in which the young can be interested, and dramatic as the life of Socrates was, without some explanation of his ideas no account of him would mean very much. There is moreover the added problem of making the life of a remote city in time and space intelligible to a world which thinks and acts on a far different plane. The Athens of Pericles and the Peloponnesian War is hard to repeople, even though its streets are today being recovered; and the glories of the Parthenon need much imagination for their revival. Yet some such condition is essential to an understanding of Socrates to the world.

It should be said, then, that here is a devoted and courageous attempt to do rather more than give the reader simply the ideas of Socrates, by setting his thought in the life of the Athens of his day. We are made to realise the essential simplicity and loveableness of this great thinker by seeing him in his daily life amongst his friends, and to understand the courage and nobility which surrounded the circumstances of his death. These last scenes are related with a skill which sends one back again to the immortal pages of the 'Apology,' and that is a high compliment. Here is a book for every library.

MEIGS, E. B. *The Silver Quest.* Illus. by F. T. Chapman. 155 pp. 7½ × 5 . . Muller 8/6

The unusual Mexican setting of this little novel no doubt contributes considerably to its total success but, setting apart, it has qualities which raise it above the normal for stories of horses of exceptional beauty or breeding. The Silver Stallion which roams the countryside unclaimed is significant not only as a descendant of the stallion of Hernán Cortés but as a symbol of freedom. Because she realises the meaning of this symbol Chela sets the horse free when eventually he falls into her hands although he represents a long-cherished desire for possession. It is impossible to convey the atmosphere of kindness and gentleness which reigns in the lives of the people of this book but it is that as much as anything else which should make it appeal to young readers of sensibility and feeling.

MONTGOMERY, R. *The Golden Stallion's Revenge.* Illus. by G. Biguere. 242 pp. 7½ × 5 Hodder & Stoughton 8/6

Like many books about horses, Mr. Montgomery's latest winds itself up rather slowly, but once the tale is launched it maintains a cracking pace. Nor does it, like some animal stories, tend to bore the reader with its preoccupation with the main subject. Charlie Carter has to cope with the loss of the palomino stallion, Golden Boy, the rustling of his mares and the discovery of a murder as part of the routine work of his father's ranch. Indeed, things are made harder by the presence of a visiting artist and his very young sister who needs to be nursed in the wild country. Charlie himself is far from being the irreproachable 'old hand' and falls into more than one bad spot through his own impetuosity. It

is the sense of proportion which runs through the whole story which makes it more than just another horse book. George Biguere's illustrations also help to give it distinction.

MOORE, A. *About Elephants.* 8 × 6¾ . Blackie 3/6

MOORE, A. *About Whales.* 8 × 6¾ . Blackie 3/6

These two publications may be aptly described as juvenile monographs on the largest land and sea animals we know, and as such they fulfil their purpose admirably at the price. The bold illustrations with their detailed captions and the clear print should make them attractive to younger or backward readers and at the same time provide material for reference for abler students. Whales, perhaps, are being a little overdone at present, but elephants here receive the attention they deserve. Both books deal fully with the habits and habitat of their subjects as well as with the use to which mankind has put these great beasts, alive or dead, and with their history.

PHELAN, J. *The Boy Who Ran Away.* Illus. by V. Mould. 152 pp. 8½ × 5½ . Macmillan 10/6

Asher Mundy ran a long way — from the eastern end of Lake Erie to the Rockies — mainly for reasons wilful rather than noble. Certainly, at first he thought he would like to be an artist and draw and paint the Indians of the North West with the gifted artist, Sam Mott, to whom he attached himself. But Mott died and Asher continued his flight to the west despite the efforts of the Hudson's Bay Company to restrain him, and though his adventures make good reading, and local and historical colour are sound, one has an uncomfortable feeling that the boy is too lawless to be truly admired. In all fairness it must be said that Miss Phelan does not paint him as a hero and she makes him pay for his temerity. He finds grace a little too easily at the end of the book when he decides that after all he will make use of Mott's legacy to study painting in Europe. The tale was inspired by the journeys of Paul Kane who travelled with the fur traders so that he could paint Indian life. Other things apart it is certainly an attractive version of conditions in North America during the days of the Hudson's Bay Company's supremacy.

PHIPSON, J. *Six and Silver.* Illus. by M. Horder. 8¾ × 5¾ . . . . Angus & Robertson 10/6

An exceptional book, a joy to read and re-read and to recommend to others. It is difficult to refrain from quotation, and impossible to choose an isolated example from so well-

integrated a text, its characters and their conversation caught so naturally and yet so skilfully that each statement seems to contribute to our understanding of these people and their background. They are very nice people, and their background is Australia, in several of its various aspects. The story opens and closes with Jack and Pat Steadman, 16 and 13, sharing a stretch of beach with Tess Moorland and her sister ; in the opening incident they are unsure of themselves in the face of the Moorlands' competence in the water — in the last they feel as much at home as on their country sheep-ranch. For in the meantime Tess has made two visits to their isolated home, and on the second she has taken part in a camping trip in the mountains, where *she* has been the beginner and a very game one. Jack's dog, Silver, and two of his friends take part in the trip, as does the ubiquitous toy of his little brother. All the children and their families are unpretentious but beautifully observed, full of individuality and humour ; the adventures that come their way are not wildly exciting, but the book is exciting for its evocation of living, of being young and up on the mountain tops for the first time, or staying in a strange place and meeting a snake in the passage, or simply doing ordinary things in good company. Most children enjoy recognizing their own everyday reactions in book-characters, but it takes a very perceptive author to make those reactions really recognizable, by attaching them to characters with a life of their own instead of merely hanging them round the neck of a lay figure who then has to be pushed into violent action to give some impression of life. The Moorlands and Steadmans obviously have a very good, rewarding life of their own, and in the few months of it presented here the reader shares not only their pleasures, but also something of their feeling for that strange vast country with its sea-shore and city life, its great open spaces and unexpected mountain heights. There is a completeness and serenity about the whole that makes the reading an Experience, as Tess herself would say. The clear, clean format, and Margaret Horder's effective illustrations hold a promise that is amply fulfilled.

RAYMOND, D. *The Young Traveller in Italy*. Illus.
159 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . Phoenix House 8/6

"I get mental indigestion if I look at too many things at once," says one of the young characters in this book, and one

tends to wonder whether the hurrying tumble of facts which are spilt generously through the book will affect the reader in the same way. The stream of information is, however, a dancing and sparkling one and while not all the details can be caught, much will be stayed on the mind, enough to give a lasting although quick and hasty impression. The book follows the same pattern as the others in this series and we accompany three young travellers on their first visit to Italy. They traverse much of the country and visit many of the towns, while most of the information presented to them is given naturally and easily by adult people instead of by incredibly well informed and rather unnatural children, as in companion works. The sharply pointed detail of the scene has colour too and the author is careful to give the right tones. An overall impression of gold and sienna touched with more vivid hues here and there is carefully painted. It is a pity that in all this glorious history and beauty that belongs to Italy, the author sometimes seems to miss the wonder of it all. One detects just a hint of materialism, just a hint of cynicism that robs the scene of its final splendour. The photographs and map are of the very high standard associated with this series.

ROBERTSON, W. *The Blue Wagon.* Illus. by J. Matthew. 184 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . O.U.P. 7/6

This book tells of the Great Trek undertaken by the Boers of South Africa during the years 1835-1837. The story centres round a fictional hero, an English boy, John Ramsay, who starts upon the Trek with his Boer foster parents, and his experiences serve to conjure up all the richly peopled and very lively background. The scene is indeed an arresting one that focuses attention on some of the events of these two years and the adventure and excitement of the history will arouse interest as well as provide information. The author's style and manner are straightforward, pursuing the narrative with unerring zeal but his earnestness tends to wear a too materialistic air. While his gaze is concentrated upon the factual panorama of the scene he is apt to miss the sight of the country and the feel of the atmosphere about him. A momentary pause to stand and stare would have brought more spirit and feeling into the rather solid work. The production is but fair and not indicative of the reasonably good piece of writing.

Ross, S. *Freedom is the Prize.* 192 pp. 7½ × 5. Hodder & Stoughton 7/6

This is a lively and energetic tale of the wars against Napoleon.

Paul Rodgers, son of an American trader who is trying to beat the British blockade of the Continent, finds himself through a series of mischances which you may accept or not as being likely, on board 'H.M.S. Adder,' fighting for the British Navy. There is a vigorous and impressive description of a ship action of these times, but after doing a not too willing best in this situation, the hero is faced with the prospect of war against his own countrymen, and chooses instead to be imprisoned in the newly-built Dartmoor. Naturally, all comes right eventually.

This does not seem quite so coherent or convincing a tale as did *Three Steps to Tyburn,* perhaps because it is rather more conventional in its setting, but it is good for all that, and should find plenty of enthusiastic readers.

Roy, O. F. *Wagons and Horses.* Illus. by M. Gernat. 255 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . Collins 8/6

Miss Fitz Roy, to a layman at least, knows her way around a circus and brings reality into her well-knit tale with many touches of actuality from daily routine which, she leaves no doubt, far outbalances the time spent in the glamour of public appearance. Mike, Mary and Nicky, orphaned, and cast off by the circus which had employed their father, join up with another belonging to cousins but have to make their way in it by merit and hard work. The plot is complicated by their picking up another circus child who has lost her memory, the consequences of that encounter leading to the dramatic though not impossible climax of the tale. Yet, the main interest throughout is in the circus and the closely-knit group who keep it alive, and in the animals, who seem more important than the humans. The constant coming and going keeps the tale moving at a very lively pace indeed and one feels that only the onset of the winter season *could* bring it to a close. If Miss Fitz Roy is looking for a sequel she could do worse than continue the adventures of the younger people into the Christmas reappearances of their star performers. The strong sprinkling of circus slang (or is it cant?) is easily mastered with the aid of the Vocabulary at the end.

SAVORY, T. H. *The World of Small Animals.* Illus.
160 pp. 8¼ × 5¼ . . . . . U.L.P. 15/-

It is only fair to judge this book on its avowed intention, which is to attempt to interest young naturalists in practical studies of small creatures which are easily available and about which not a very great deal is known. As Mr. Savory points out, butterflies and moths have been done to death and egg-collections are 'dead.' With much less exotic creatures there is every chance for the humblest beginner to contribute something new to studies so far made and to build up a 'study' of his own. For that reason the present books consists of two parts, the first dealing with the general principles governing the study of small animals, and the second part of short introductions to the study of a selection of small animals to give an interested reader a chance to choose where he will start. The whole thing is excellently written and illustrated and interesting reading even for those who may decide that following it up is not for them.

SLEIGH, L. *The Boy in the Ivy.* Illus. by K. Adamson. 223 pp. 8¼ × 5¼ . . Faber 10/6

Not many writers have successfully followed E. Nesbit into that world of magic which lies so close to the everyday contemporary world. Mrs. Norton is the leader of a small company, which is now joined by a most promising newcomer. Linwood Sleigh writes with such assurance, vigour and controlled imagination that one suspects a pseudonym.

The Boy in the Ivy is a story about witchcraft which, while it is extremely funny, never loses sight of the importance of the battle with evil which underlies the tale. There is no lack of invention of incident and character, the story moves on the brink of real poetry, and the terror and mystery of the theme gains force by being interpreted in terms of the commonplace world. Mr. Sleigh knows his nursery rhymes as well as his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*; he is, moreover, a story-teller of quality, a humorist, and a bit of a philosopher. I enjoyed his book tremendously, and wish that he had been better served by his illustrator. Miss Adamson at her best is reminiscent of Mervyn Peake on an off-day ; at worst she is merely incompetent.

THOMAS, J. *Leonardo da Vinci.* Illus. by D. Walsh. 141 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . . . Muller 6/6

A book about Leonardo could not possibly have been omitted from this or any other series with similar purpose. Mr. Thomas deserves every credit for having given, in the space available, a comprehensive account of the achievements of this incredible genius and for having conveyed as well a strong sense of his personality and character.

TODD, J. & J. L. (EDS.). *Voices from the Past.* 550 pp. 8½ × 5½ . . . . Phoenix House 30/–

It is unlikely that the Classics will ever again form the essential basis of education for very many people, and one may be permitted some regret over that. Whether indeed their study did lead to those qualities of judgment and clarity of thought which were sometimes claimed for it, and whether if so other disciplines may not have the same results is an open question. One thing is certain, that for increasing numbers of people the magnificent heritage of Greece and Rome must remain unappreciated if it is to be approached only in the original, and great will be the loss. After all, more than we ever realise of our thought, our ethical views, our law, and even our science draws from these sources. Here our civilisation has its roots.

The greater the value, therefore, to be attached to such a compilation as this, in which some of the best of that literature is collected, in translations by many authors, which are generally faithful to their originals, and which sometimes do catch, indeed, a gleam of that light which shone for a short space on Hellas. Nor is Rome neglected, but it is to the first part of the book that one returns.

The authors are to be congratulated on a timely and needed anthology, and the book itself, with its well-chosen plates, is a pleasure to read and handle.

VIPONT, C. *The Heir of Craigs.* Illus. by T. Theobald. 211 pp. 8½ × 5½ . . . O.U.P. 10/6

Older children often feel a concern they cannot express about problems of faith and conduct and the only material offered them is often banal and unconvincing, so it is good to find a book in which counsel is so well integrated with interesting characters and actions as to provide, not an answer to all questions, but a line of thought which may lead to the

answers. Mrs. Vipont is one author who can be depended upon for a sound 'message' and full measure in other ways as well, although in the present book she has perhaps attempted rather a lot in the other ways. The reader is given almost too much to think about — the Stuart cause in England, France and America, the Indians' preference of Spaniards to English, and much else, but it is still an exceedingly readable book with more substance than most. It begins in the north of England in 1696, crosses the Atlantic to incorporate an actual occurrence, (the shipwreck and capture by Indians of a small party, mostly of Quakers, who make a gruelling journey northwards), abruptly shifts to the court of St. Germain, and back to Craigs in the north before leaving the hero bound for America again. Nigel meets a great deal of adventure and danger in the course of the story, but the unifying theme is his search for faith. The strange household at Craigs has brought him to mistrust all men, himself most of all, when a cousin's belief that life without trust is not worth living, and a chance glimpse of Margaret Fox, "Mistress Fell," makes him realise its importance. Throughout his adventures he meets people whose attitudes help to explain the nature of faith, a Quaker merchant, and fine old Robert Barrow, serene in the face of the Indians' bestiality; a drunken doctor whose ideas alone can be trusted, the ship's captain, steadfast in the disasters for which he feels responsible, and the memory of the Protestant parson who was his maternal grandfather, of Father Benedict at Craigs, and above all of Mistress Fell, seen so fleetingly and memorably. And though he has not found faith by the end of the book, he feels he has come into his heritage as it is men of his own name who have shown him the courage he must bring to his faith when found. It says much for Mrs. Vipont that she is able to make her points effectively without interrupting the story or obviously preaching; the whole is very all of a piece, very honest, and often very stirring. The writing is excellent throughout, and the author has Stevenson's knack of adding a telling afterthought to a statement that suddenly illuminates the whole. Some of the characters are a bit hazy, but most are clear and each makes some contribution easily and naturally. The scene in which Nigel meets the little Prince of Wales is very moving, as is each reference to Mistress Fell, and there is a wonderful scene of suspense in which he slips some stolen jewels

from the pocket of his wicked Uncle Askew. Nigel becomes likeable and develops at a believable rate, and his adventures seem likely to be read and re-read for some time to come. The illustrations are less satisfactory, and make everyone look rather spindly and unappealing, but show both thought and promise.

VOEGELI, M. *The Wonderful Lamp.* Illus. by F. Hoffman. 210 pp. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ . . O.U.P. 10/6

This fabulous story of how Ali, the little beggar-boy thief of Bagdad, went in search of Aladdin's wonderful lamp is in the best traditions of Arabian Nights lore. The beggar-boy escapes death by inches in the streets of old Bagdad, on the high seas of the Indian Ocean sailing under the great captain Sinbad, in battles with pirates, in dungeons from which he is miraculously saved by the great Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid. Like the blue-bird of happiness the lamp is in his own hovel, and Ali the beggar-boy is discovered to be Ahmed, Prince of Hindustan. This is a rich and colourful story, well illustrated, not for the squeamish child and not for the younger children; but for boys and girls aged about nine to thirteen who have a mind for magic and pirates and who can find romance and adventure away from space ships and television and may prefer the gangster of old Arabia to the modern thing.

FOR THE INTERMEDIATE LIBRARY

ARLOTT, J. *Australian test journal.* Illus. 160 pp. $8\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ . . . . . Phoenix House 9/6

ROBINSON, R. *The glad season.* Illus. 256 pp. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ . . . . . Collins 15/–

Two more books on cricket! There always has been much written on cricket and there always will be, but fortunately we are at present having a respite after the deluge of books on the game which descended on the publishing market about three or four years ago. Whitaker's Five-year Cumulative Book-list 1948-52 lists nearly two hundred titles on cricket, but the flood has subsided to a gentle trickle of worthwhile books. Both Arlott and Robinson can write and their books should be added to the stock of libraries. Whereas

Arlott is more of a reporter, Ray Robinson is a stylist and I have long regarded him as the Australian Cardus, which is indeed a compliment. This new book by him is particularly suitable reading for boys. On the title page he quotes Carlyle that "youth is to all the glad season of life" and then proceeds to enlarge the theme that cricket is being refreshed by an unusual intake of young men. His book finally becomes an inspiring account of the triumphs of young cricketers wherever the game is played. Not only does he consider Tyson, Cowdrey and May of England, but Archer of Australia, Hanif Mohammad from Pakistan, McCarthy of South Africa, Donelly of New Zealand and Stollmeyer of the West Indies. This is strongly recommended for school and youth libraries.

Arlott's book is a diary of the Test matches played in Australia in 1954-55. Anyone wishing to recapture something of the excitement of those days could not want a better book. Although he is now a reporter, Arlott never gives us journalese.

BARTON, A. *Kate in Advertising.* 191 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$.
Bodley Head 7/6

When Kate Wilson broke into advertising, she plunged herself and us the readers into a world of copy-writing for which it is almost necessary to learn a new language and which, according to Miss Barton's account, seems almost unintelligible to the average consumer — as we soon learn to describe ourselves. Kate herself picks up the jargon surprisingly quickly, more so than one reader did, and is soon up to the neck in advertising campaigns, choosing media, writing copy, despatching copy to Layout, Art, Typographer and so on. She learns about Spreading the Message, checking over the Media, breaking up 2,500 women covering all age groups, occupations and classes — this for Market Investigation. Soon she is right-hand help to Miss Fordyce, chief copy-writer ('"She's a real career woman" Kate thought admiringly, noting the well-cut suit and neat shoes') and has also gone out on a market research house-to-house enquiry where both investigators got badly snubbed — not surprisingly, judging from their manners and questions.

All ends very prosperously and promisingly for Kate after she has given a portentous report to the directors on the great Flip campaign (slogan: "Lots More Lather with Flip") and Kate is to go to America for advertising experience with even more Lather ahead of her.

Miss Ann Barton may know her subject from A to Z but she does not seem strong on her story side. Career books are after all mainly intended for the uninitiated, and of those many are barely in their teens. This book presupposes much more knowledge than any outsider could possibly have acquired, especially young ones. The tightly packed facts and the advertising outlook are hard to master; sales psychology is likely to be beyond most teenagers, and the book is really based on that.

BAXTER, V. *Elizabeth: Young Policewoman.* 190 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . . . Bodley Head 7/6

HAWKEN, P. *Clare in Television.* 190 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$. Bodley Head 7/6

These two newcomers to the Bodley Head's "Career Novels" achieve successfully the object of this series, which is both to tell a story and give an authentic picure of a girl's first years in a specific career. Elizabeth Felton is a likeable young woman of twenty-one years old who begins her career as a shorthand-typist, does some evening social work in a club in the East End, helps a Woman Police Constable on the job, and herself joins the Force. She finds a good deal to learn about Licences, Acts, Powers of Arrest and other complicated matters, besides the more active side of the training. There are friends to be made, both men and women, and many incidents and experiences before she is really Woman Police Constable Elizabeth Felton, through the Junior Specialist Course, hoping one day for the C.I.D., and Getting Her Man (her jewel thief) and incidentally a job for a juvenile delinquent in whom she is interested. Though she does not get her man in another sense, since handsome Johnny Grey marries another girl, no hearts are broken, and W.P.C. Felton happily sips tea and says that a policewoman's life "suits her all right." Story: adequate. Information: good and not overpowering. Atmosphere: friendly.

Pamela Hawken takes us through Vision House with Clare Francis and Karen West following briskly in the wake of Glyn Morley, producer. This is a lively, slightly more glamorous, rather more technical book than the story of Elizabeth, but it gives an introduction to back-stage (or back-view) in T.V. that should interest readers even if they are not avid viewers or highly screen-conscious and ambitious. The phraseology is not too obscure, explanations are made of

difficult points, and though we guess that Clare will rise to the top with hardly a trip as she climbs — or soars — up the ladder, and though we always knew that she (unlike Elizabeth Felton) would 'Get Her Man,' the story is quite enjoyable for the average practical young modern girl.

BRUCE, D. F. *The Bartle Bequest.* Illus. by S. Green. 253 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . O.U.P. 9/6

Miss Bruce is a brisk, bright story teller proceeding at a comfortable pace and carrying along with her some tempting interest that keeps the reader at her side. The interest here is antiques and she imbues the subject with its rightful fascination. Bethia Fairgreave has to leave school suddenly to earn her own living and soon finds herself working as companion-housekeeper to Primula Mary Beton, the curator of a new museum. The interest finds an outlet in a story of some originality and quiet unassuming events, while Miss Bruce endeavours to base the whole upon a foundation of right values and behaviour. There is no reaching below the surface here, no stops for thought or meditation, but the tripping superficial tale has a quiet and healthy air very suitable for the older girl, while the general appearance of the volume is a satisfying one.

CERELY, S. *The Gyr Falcon Adventure.* Illus. 255 pp. 8 × 5½ . . . . . Collins 18/-

The author spent three weeks in Iceland in search of the Gyr Falcon and this book is the record of that search. He was able to locate four of these rare birds and to photograph and observe them and several other interesting species of bird life. This book is perhaps written primarily for the ornithologist but will interest the uninitiated on introduction and inspire the older child with something of the author's own enthusiasm. Stanley Cerely has a gay zest for life and a continual twinkle in his eye which he can successfully translate into his writing while something of a poet's mind breaks through in lines that have in themselves the beauty of life which he continually observed about him. He tells us not only of the bird life which he saw in Iceland but also of the land and its people, and the camera of his mind records a coloured, lively and balanced picture of life in general. The picture includes the busy harassed Londoner on his homeward bus seen at the beginning of the venture as well as all the varied personalities met in the

rigorous climate of the North. In all this picture the central and foreground figures are of course the birds and Mr. Cerely gives us a detailed impression of movement and vigour that compels our participating enjoyment. The production is good while the photographs are an integral and fascinating part of the whole.

COPLEY, G. *Going into the past.* Illus. 160 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . . . . Phoenix House 8/6

This is a neat and scholarly work presenting an ordered assembly of facts in a simple and outspoken manner. There is no attempt here to butter or sweeten the bread, no attempt to inveigle the reader into the subject by flowery paths or roundabout alluring ways. All is solid plain and wholesome fare. The path is hard and straight and narrow. Thus the child who has no preliminary spark of interest in the subject will not read the book. The author, however, writes for the intelligent older child with some gleam of interest. For him or her the book is a valuable and fascinating guide. The author, a field archaeologist, writes of prehistoric times and takes us through a wealth of detected detail to the time of the Dark Ages. Each chapter is appended with instructions for the young archaeologist today and a concluding chapter on "What You Can Do" gives every help and incentive to the beginner and young enthusiast. The maps, charts, illustrations and photographs are excellent. One would have welcomed an occasional smile from the author, an occasional unbending of the pedagogue, but the serious and plainly fashioned work is a happy change from the usual well sugared pills of non-fiction.

FRANKLAND, H. *Dalehead.* 207 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$. Dent 11/6

This story of the Westmorland fells and dales has the ring of truth, an authenticity vouched for by the author's ancestry and her own life on a Westmorland farm. Into the plain story of the daily work on the farms and the difficulties of winter is incorporated a tale of jealousy and feud, resulting in the accident to his father which forces the son Rob to take on the duties of master of the farm. The fusion of this element with the main story is incomplete, rather overdrawn and not too credible. By comparison the romantic part of the tale is very well handled and the quietly affectionate family life of the Whartons has its parallel in many such country homes. A story likely to appeal to older girls.

GARNETT, EMMELINE. *Hills of Sheep.* Illus. by J. Kiddell-Monroe. 192 pp. 7¾ × 5¼. Hodder & Stoughton 9/6

This story is set in the latter half of the nineteenth century and has as its background the building of the railway from Settle to Carlisle. It concerns an orphaned boy of the Yorkshire Moors who escapes from his tyrannical aunt and uncle to work on the railway in that area, to make his home with a lively happy family in one of the railway shanty towns and to become the protegée and friend of John Sharman, a surveyor of the Company. The background scene is solid and lively, forming a strong and urgent atmosphere for the story of Will's perseverance and industry. The author herself is entangled in all the deep roots of the story and her eagerness and zest as she seeks to unfold the growing tale matches Will's own ambition and sturdiness of heart. The real background is based too on sure foundations, for Miss Garnett has a sense of true values that make their presence felt and put the drama into its right perspective. Miss Joan Kiddell-Monroe's illustrations are truly artistic and suit the boldness of the work.

HOUSTON, C. AND BATES, R. *K2: The Savage Mountain.* Illus. 192 pp. 8¾ × 6 . Collins 25/-

K2, 900 miles west of Everest, is the second highest mountain in the world. Aptly called "the mountaineer's mountain," for fifty years it defied all attempts to climb it until the successful Italian expedition of last year.

This book is the chronicle of the failure — if reaching the top of a mountain is the only success in mountaineering — of the 1953 American expedition.

The early chapters are dull and full of the commonplaces of preparation and approach march. But once the climb starts, interest rises rapidly to a magnificent climax in the episode of Camp VIII at 25,500 feet. Here one of the party was ill. Dr. Houston, the leader of the expedition, diagnosed thrombophlebitis. The attack on the summit was abandoned for an attempt to get the sick man off the savage mountain alive.

What followed was surely one of the greatest struggles in the history of mountaineering. The weather was appalling and the descent of 9,000 feet over very difficult slopes with a dying man must have looked like suicide. At one point, most of the party, as a result of one man's slip, found themselves

in a mad helter-skelter down a 45 degree ice slope which ended in thousands of feet of empty space. Miraculously, they were stopped, but their sick companion and his stretcher were never seen again. This casualty, tragedy though it was, probably saved the lives of the rest of the party.

There are enough thrills, real-life thrills, in the second half of this book to satisfy any young reader. Nor could he fail to admire the courage, team-work, modesty and self-sacrifice of this handful of men who, in the hour of danger, forgot themselves and were prepared to lay down their lives for their friend.

There are some twenty photographs, which vary greatly in quality, and several appendices dealing with the more technical aspects of the expedition.

HOWARTH, D. *We Die Alone.* Illus. 254 pp. 8 × 5½ . . . . . Collins 15/-

This title, very much on the pattern of far too many recent books about the war, is misleading, and should not be allowed to put off any intending reader to whom it may sound rather too melodramatic. The book is a really good one, restrained, and effective for that very fact, for the material in which it deals would be set down as quite incredible had the handling resulted in any over-dramatising. Briefly, the story is that of Jan Baalsrud, a young Norwegian who was one of a party landed in the north of his country to organise local measures against the German occupation forces. The landing ended in a disaster which caused the deaths of all his companions, and Jan Baalsrud was left to struggle alone to an eventual escape into Sweden which never until the last moment seemed even remotely possible. Two things alone carried him through, his own superhuman courage and endurance, and the selfless and dangerous co-operation of the Norwegians who never ceased their efforts to get him into safety. Reading this book, one can see well enough why the Germans never felt the least security in the lands they overran, and can understand how much of their unnecessary brutality to the civil populations arose from a panicky nervousness which must have grown as the end of the War drew nearer.

This is a fine book, well-written, and carefully illustrated with good and illuminating photographs.

JEWELL, A. J. *The Observer's book of Mosses and Liverworts.* Illus. 128 pp. 6 × 3½ . Warne 5/-

LESTER, R. M. *The Observer's Book of Weather.* Illus. 152 pp. 6 × 3½ . . . Warne 5/-

Two additions to a well-known and justly popular series. Mr. Jewell confines himself to those plants which can be studied with the naked eye and a pocket lens, and which are at the same time common and widely spread.

Mr. Lester has made the complexities of weather forecasting as simple as possible and the reader is helped by a series of excellent photographs, many of them in colour.

KENDALL, J. *Michael Faraday, Man of Simplicity.* Illus. 196 pp. 8 × 5¼ . . . Faber 12/6

It is fitting that Professor Kendall should have followed up his life of Davy by an account of his pupil and assistant Faraday, alike in the importance and range of their investigations, yet so different in temperament. Faraday's name is not unknown to pupils as that of the founder of our electrical age, and many will have encountered the laws of electrolysis and be familiar with the names he coined and the units named after him, with para- and diamagnetism, with the synthesis of benzene and the liquefaction of gases, and some may even have come across an old copy of the *Chemical History of a Candle* in the library. Yet they are not likely to know much of the life of this simple and unassuming man, whose work was characterised by patient investigation and lucid description, and whose life was one of family content and public integrity. He broke with Davy, but never ceased to praise his work and acknowledge his own debt to him. This addition to the 'Introductory Biographies' gives an excellent account of the man Faraday, as well as of the natural philosopher.

Now that so much science is written in increasingly difficult mathematical language, we may wonder how Faraday got on with such slender analytical equipment. As so often has happened, the symbols were lying at hand for a more universal description of his ideas, but it is doubtful whether he would have understood them. He seems to have been guided by a marvellous intuition, and the firm belief that, just as he had demonstrated the essential unity of the various manifestations of electrical energy, so all forms of energy would

ulimately be shown to be aspects of one great prime mover. To this monistic outlook was due, perhaps, his opposition to Dalton's atomism — Faraday's one blind spot.

Boys and girls are not unaware of the conflict between science and religion, and they will here find one man's solution of the problem. Faraday kept his scientific and religious beliefs, it seems, completely isolated from each other, and made no attempt to reconcile them. He was a devout Christian of an obscure sect, and never failed in the observances of his cult. This made no difference to his friendship with his enthusiastic admirer, the agnostic Tyndall, with whom he would never discuss those topics which not long after his death formed one of the subjects of high Victorian polemic.

Faraday was never approaching well off, but rich in honours. This is Professor Kendall's judgment: 'He could be rich and miserable, or he could be poor and happy; he chose the latter.'

KOCH, L. *Memoirs of a Birdman.* Illus. 188 pp.
$8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$ . . . . . Phoenix House 16/-

Many radio listeners will probably discover with something of a shock that they have had access to the treasured recordings of bird-song compiled by Ludwig Koch for nearly twenty years. The real enthusiasts among bird-watchers probably do realise the incredible amount of patience and perseverance which have gone to the permanent recording of hundreds of sounds which the casual watcher and listener are lucky to hear once in a lifetime, and a growing number of tape-recorder operators, amateurs among them, are probably on the way to understanding the tremendous technical difficulties involved in obtaining just *one* really satisfactory recording of the elusive and unpredictable performances of nature. The Ludwig Koch collection at the B.B.C. now constitutes an international treasure-house for natural history students of the future but the story of its accumulation is told here with a mixture of charming modesty and pardonable vanity which obviously leaves out much more than it could possibly put in. Koch's thoroughness is probably a trait of his Teutonic ancestry but his cheerfulness and placidity in his endless operations seem to be also partly a gift from the nation which has done rather more than adopt him. Radio listeners of all ages, bird-watchers or not, should enjoy and appreciate this account of his remarkable adventures. The photographs are numerous and excellent.

MARQUARD, L. *The Story of South Africa.* 251 pp. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ . . . . . Faber 15/6

Mr. Marquard's aim has been to trace the strands of invasion, conquest, absorption, rivalry between Boer and British, diamond discoveries, Union and nationalism which have contributed to the history and present condition of South Africa. He has managed to do it without being dull but he has done it thoroughly enough to make good reading for the serious and fairly intelligent student of affairs. As a book for Sixth Form readers, or older, who want to deal with a topic such as this, nothing could be more useful. Though deliberate, Mr. Marquard has a good sense of the dramatic and often enlivens his narrative with bracing but sound accounts of some of South Africa's more hair-raising internal enterprises. In his concluding chapter on Union and Division the author, wisely, does not debate the rights and wrongs of the present situation but states the main problems facing South Africa's multi-racial society. It is the rest of his book which throws illumination over that situation and helps at least to an understanding if not to a solution. There are excellent illustrations and maps throughout.

MEYNELL, L. *Great men of Staffordshire.* Illus. 158 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . . . Bodley Head 7/6

COOPER, L. *Great men of Yorkshire (West Riding).* Illus. 160 pp. $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . . Bodley Head 7/6

The aim of this new "Men of the Counties" series is to give young readers a palatable dose of potted history, past and present, through a collection of brief, informative stories about famous men and women. The emphasis is on the story rather than on the history, which seems to me the right approach.

Each county is to be dealt with separately and the lives of some six or eight well-known personalities, born in or closely associated with the county, will make up the appropriate volume.

The danger of such a series is that it will either be sunk by a dead-weight of scholarship or choked by the dust of antiquity. In neither of these two volumes under review is there the remotest indication of either possibility.

Both are written in simple, vigorous prose, and select sufficient and suitable details to appeal to young readers. They

are balanced in choice of subjects and are illustrated. They include "moderns" such as Arnold Bennett and Delius as well as ancients such as Henry Clifford and Izaak Walton.

The men and women chosen represent many different walks of life: writers, scientists, sailors, industrialists, musicians, sportsmen. Mr. Meynell writes about Dr. Johnson, Izaak Walton, Josiah Wedgwood, Lord Jervis and Arnold Bennett; Miss Cooper's eight biographies include Charles Waterton, Sir Titus Salt of Saltaire, Blind Jack of Knaresborough and Charlotte Bronte.

If these two books are to set the standard, the series should be a success with intelligent readers over twelve in any county. They will certainly stimulate interest in both people and places: it is a great pity that each brief life is not given its own short list of books for further reading.

PLOWMAN, S. *Nelson.* Illus. by R. Kennedy. 168 pp.
$7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ . . . . . Methuen 9/6

This is a very readable account of the great Admiral, told unashamedly in a spirit of admiration and eulogy. It is none the worse for that, the more so as it is intended for children, to whom hero-worship comes naturally. As a result, the vanities and strange weaknesses of Lord Nelson's character are barely hinted at, and the author's intention is to bring out the selfless patriotism, the professional skill, and above all, the intense and almost terrifying courage of this great seaman. Nor is that other quality, more strange perhaps in his age, of essential kindliness towards his officers and crews lost sight of. This, indeed, may in the final account, have been his most valuable contribution to the Navy of the future, and the proof of Nelson's genius.

The book is well-produced and effectively illustrated, and is an admirable introduction both to Nelson and to the Navy and its battles in the 18th century.

PRAGER, H. G. *Through Arctic Hurricanes.* Illus.
161 pp. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$ . . Thames and Hudson 10/6

Two journalists joined a German Fishery Protection Ship on its journey to the Arctic. This book is the record, in word and picture, of their experiences.

It gives, in somewhat stodgy dollops, information on the Northern Lights, the Gulf Stream, the Polar Night, fishing, radar, weather forecasting and similar subjects. The narrative

parts of the book are livelier: they give a personal impression of life on board a 700 tonner, and there are sufficient incidents — the doctor's trip across a rough sea in a rubber dinghy, or the chaos during a hurricane, for instance — to keep the story moving.

RYDER, J. *Printing for Pleasure.* Illus. 142 pp. 7 × 4½ . . . . . Phoenix House 9/6

For the individual or for schools who contemplate taking up printing as a hobby this book can be highly recommended. But note the word 'hobby.' It is not for people who wish to turn the honest penny by buying an Adana press and printing the billheads for the local tradesmen. To appreciate Mr. Ryder's book and to get the maximum use from it you must be a lover of print, for the tasteful appearance of a well laid out page of type, invitation card or broadsheet. Instructions are given on what sort of press to buy (and I am gratified that it is thought desirable to get a platen), what type face you can "live with" and some interesting experiments. The practical work of composing, inking etc. is explained in sufficient detail and information is given also on where to buy supplies.

SHEPHARD, M. *Instructions to Young Anglers.* Illus. 128 pp. 8¾ × 5¾ . . . Museum Press 9/6

Mr. Shephard is a practised journalist in matters concening angling, and his own experience and interests cover all branches of fresh-water fishing which this country affords. Consequently this book is a good one. In the first place it is well illustrated, and though it may be said that nothing really replaces the river-side coaching of an expert, the next best thing is a well-written book and plenty of diagrams. Such will not provide the beginner with fish, but will at least give some confidence until greater experience comes to his rescue.

Another praiseworthy feature of the book is that Mr. Shephard, expert though he be, shows himself possessed of the most vital piece of angling equipment of all, the readiness to go on learning himself. This puts him into an easy relationship with the tyro, who will be spared the somewhat Olympian approach of some writers on this subject.

Finally, Mr. Shephard's enthusiasm is infectious. What he loves is not one particular kind of fishing but fishing in gener, and along with it, the entrancing miinutae of the sport, the baits and the rods and the reels — and above all — the river.

THOMPSON, A. A. *Great Men of Kent.* Illus.
158 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . . Bodley Head 7/6

This series — Men of the Counties — embodies an excellent idea. The first example is disappointing. Mr. Thomson has made a reasonably satisfying choice: a soldier (Wolfe), a statesman (Pitt), a writer (Wells), a sportsman (Woolley) and one who was all these things and more (Sidney); he fails to bring any of them to life. The brief biographical sketches are conventional in the extreme, and they fail to show how their subjects were influenced by their native county. The book lacks a unifying feature, either by subject or by the author's distinctive style.

THOMPSON, K. R. *The mental side of golf.* Illus.
157 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . . . Muller 10/6

The author of this fascinating book is a successful amateur golfer and a trained psychologist. He has made a study of the game as practised by champions and from his analysis he advises the beginner and less accomplished player. The secret of success at any game he argues is mental as well as technical. So far as we know, this is the first textbook of applied golf psychology. In this troubled age of anxiety and H-bombs this book may be necessary and do much good, but one cannot help feeling that the best and happiest players of any game are those natural ball players who need little coaching and who are often spoiled by it.

WRENCH, M. STANLEY- *Harlequin's Revenge.*
103 pp. 7½ × 5 . . . Centaur Press 6/–

Four varied and attractive plays for marionettes, suitable for audiences of all ages, and a welcome change from the usual routine choice of amateur companies. The title play is a neat Harlequinade in three short scenes, the second an Arabian Night's type of tale with comic additions, in six short acts with suggestions for a variety show afterward, the third is acted in pantomime to the reading of an amusing verse story, and the last is a pleasing fable in blank verse about a woodman who falls in love with a dryad. The author shows real respect for her audience, and makes full use of the medium — both the comedy and other 'business' of which puppets alone are capable seem very effective, and certainly gain by being in well-devised, intelligently written plays. Many provisions for variation are made and suggestions given for

duplication of actors and for music and other effects, and the characters are appreciatively described. The first three plays have been presented by two puppeteers and assistants in a small portable theatre, and must have been delightful to watch. No acting fee is required, though naturally author and publisher would appreciate acknowledgements, and the performance of the plays would seem within the scope of older children.

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